



Emergency Food Assistance to Vulnerable Households in Barh el Gazal, Chad

COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT AID-FFP-G-15-00065

First Quarterly Report

June 26, 2015 - September 30, 2015

Submitted to: Office of Food for Peace, USAID

Submission Date: November 12, 2015

1. Key information

Implementing Agency:

International Rescue Committee, Inc. – Chad Rue de Bordeaux, Quartier Beguinage, 2e Arrondissement

BP: 5208

N'Djamena, Chad

Steven LaVake, IRC Chad Country Director

Email: Steven.LaVake@rescue.org

Agency Headquarters:

International Rescue Committee, Inc. 122 East 42nd Street, New York, NY 10168, USA

Telephone: +1 (212) 551-3015

Fax: +1 (212) 551-3185

Amber Kubera, Program Officer E-mail: Amber.Kubera@rescue.org

Project Title: Emergency food assistance to vulnerable households in Bahr el Gazal, Chad

Project Duration: June 26, 2015 – January 25, 2016

Program Goal: To support vulnerable households covering their basic food needs during the 2015

lean season.

Budget: 2,000,000 USD

2. Situation

The security situation has remained relatively calm in the area of implementation in the Bahr el Gazal (BeG) Region. Soldiers at the local military base have occasionally held protests against their wages and living conditions, but this has not posed a threat to the safety of IRC staff or affected the implementation of project activities. Boko Haram attacks in the neighboring region of Lake Chad have had no observed impact on the security situation in Bahr el Gazal.

3. Summary of Activities

3.1 Staff Recruitment

The implementing team is supervised by the Livelihoods Coordinator and is made up of ten staff including: one Food Security Assistant Manager, Two Food Security Officers (Distribution Supervisors), one M&E Assistant, one Community Mobilization Officer, and six Distribution Assistants (Animators). Following the resignation of the previous Livelihoods Coordinator, the IRC recruited a new Livelihoods Coordinator who began working on the project on September 14th. The second Food Security Officer (Distribution Supervisor) was appointed on September 15th. Three of the six Distribution assistants were appointed on September 8th and the rest of the team has been in place since August.

3.2 Context Analysis, Food and Cash Distribution

In order to prepare for the food and cash distribution in June, the IRC conducted a detailed context assessment of markets surrounding Mossoro. The main points assessed were:

• The availability of markets and potential vendors to supply food for voucher redemption in and around Moussoro

- The market supply and price levels of the main targeted commodities (oil, rice, pulses)
- The existence of potential cash distribution agencies
- The security context

The results of the analysis helped the team make decisions regarding standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the project, which were subsequently approved in July. These SOPs provided IRC Chad with the necessary details pertaining to food voucher and cash distribution procedures for vendors and agencies and established the sequence of steps for conducting distributions. The SOPs also advised the IRC on distribution and payment modalities for beneficiaries, potential security challenges and related risk mitigation. In order to minimize security risks for beneficiaries and project liability, the IRC selected the mobile service provider Tigo to facilitate cash transfers, which are then fulfilled by local vendors. In this system, Tigo provides the IRC with tokens bearing unique codes. IRC staff then distribute these tokens to beneficiaries for the beneficiaries to redeem the tokens with local vendors. The vendors are not Tigo employees, but have a pre-existing relationship with Tigo as local facilitators of private cash transfers, a widely-used system throughout Chad. IRC staff selected specific vendors from whom beneficiaries will receive their cash transfers based on the vendors' capacity to have sufficient cash on hand when transfers take place. This distribution strategy is in line with the project proposal for food vouchers and cash distributions. The food voucher and cash distributions were initially scheduled to be undertaken on a monthly basis, beginning in August 2015. Following the distributions, the IRC planned to conduct a Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM). The original distribution cycle did not take place as planned due to unanticipated constraints, described in detail in section four.

3.3 Beneficiary Selection

As recommended by the Chad Food Security Cash and Voucher Sub-cluster, beneficiaries were identified using the Household Economy Analysis (HEA) criteria, which considers the number of household members, productive assets, and livestock holdings. Consultations with local authorities and village selection committees comprised of village leaders and elders, both men and women, took place to ensure the proper and fair selection of beneficiaries, while also considering local gender dynamics. The majority of beneficiaries receiving cash and vouchers are women, especially those from poor or extremely poor households, identified using a participatory approach involving community members and informed by the HEA methodology. Women form the majority of workers in the rural sector, but cultural marginalization means they often exercise little power in deciding how to allocate their households' resources. This makes these women and their children particularly vulnerable to food insecurity. Women were targeted for participation in all activities, with entire households benefitting from increased income and behavior change activities.

The IRC targeted a total of 27,000 individuals, or 4,500 poor and very poor households, in the subprefectures of Amsilep, Salal, Moundjoura, and Dourgoulanga. This accounts for an estimated 64% of the population of the target zone living in acute food insecurity, as identified in the March 2015 Enquête Nationale sur la Securité Alimentaire (ENSA), a food security study conducted jointly by the World Food Program (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

The IRC assists 4,500 households in the following geographical locations:

- Amsilep sub-prefecture, southern BeG: 1,500 households with limited access to agricultural activities, identified jointly by IRC and local authorities.
- Moundjoura sub-prefecture (1,500 households), Dourgoulanga sub-prefecture (1,000 households, and Salal sub-prefecture (500 households), northern BeG.

When writing the proposal, the IRC assumed that there was an average of 6 members per household, based on previous HEA assessments, resulting in the target number of 27,000 individuals (4,500 households x 6 per household). The baseline survey revealed that the average household size was actually 9 individuals, therefore the IRC has increased the target to 40,500 (4,500 households x 9 per household) to more accurately represent the beneficiaries targeted.

3.4 Baseline

All baseline surveyors were recruited and trained in August, and the IRC hired a highly qualified Livelihoods Coordinator to lead the baseline process. The baseline study was completed at the end of September covering a random sample of 293 households out of the targeted 4,500 households in Bahr el Gazal region, with 75 from Amsilep, 75 from Moundjoura, 74 from Dourgoulanga, and 69 from Salal.

Indicators covered include:

- Socio-demographic characteristics of household respondents
- Sources of revenue and expenditures
- Food Consumption Score
- Coping Strategies
- Agriculture and livestock
- Market access
- Water and Sanitation
- Prior humanitarian assistance

3.5 Awareness-raising package

The awareness-raising package was developed in July and implemented in August by the three Distribution Assistants recruited that same month, with the support of staff from another IRC livelihoods project in the Bahr el Gazal, prior to the first scheduled distribution.

Using posters and other drawn materials, the following themes were presented to community assemblies, as part of the beneficiary selection process:

- Best food and nutrition practices for mothers and children;
- Household hygiene and sanitation best practices, and
- Household budgeting principles and resource management.

The same themes will be repeated during the distribution of beneficiaries' cards, targeting selected beneficiaries more specifically.

4. Challenges and Lessons Learned

Staff turnover, particularly of the Livelihoods Coordinator, who is responsible for overseeing the project, caused significant delays in the start of some activities. The delayed activities included team recruitment, beneficiary identification, vendor selection, and the baseline survey.

The vehicle provided by USAID for the Food for Peace team in Moussoro was held up by the Chadian customs agency, which indicated that significant fees were owed on the vehicle due to the fact that the registration was allowed to expire while the vehicle was parked at the US Embassy prior to being lent to the IRC. The IRC worked with FFP to find a solution between the US embassy and the Chadian government. The absence of the FFP/USAID vehicle in Moussoro affected the teams' ability to travel to project implementation sites and to monitor activities. Fortunately, the vehicle is now in the IRC's possession and due to go to Moussoro at the end of October.

The IRC did not expect these delays to have a long-term impact on the project. However, as the planned distribution schedule coincided with the peak of the lean season from July through September, food prices

increased (particularly for millet and oil). This surge in prices is partially due to the closure of Chadian borders with neighboring countries affected by Boko Haram, cutting pastoralists in the BeG off from their main target markets in Niger and Nigeria. The vendors also increased their prices which no longer matched with those predicted during project design. As the costs originally budgeted did not reflect market price fluctuations, vendors were not willing to accept additional costs incurred. Negotiations between the IRC and the vendors to resolve these issues lasted until mid-October, which coincided with the seasonal harvest, resulting in some decline in food prices. This delay in voucher distribution resulted in a delay in cash transfers, as the intent of simultaneous cash transfers alongside food voucher distribution was to prevent beneficiaries from selling off their vouchers to meet eventual cash needs. This is the main reason the project management decided to delay the start of cash transfers, as well.

Although the distributions did not take place during the lean season as planned, different observations report that beneficiaries are still in dire need of assistance, with many expected to experience food shortages as early as November. These observations are as follows:

- The Bahr el Ghazal region finds itself in a chronic state of food insecurity, with dismal crop yields on an annual basis, as confirmed annually by National Food Security Surveys (ENSA).
- A rapid assessment conducted by the IRC has shown that due to poor harvests, households continue to have low food stocks, and households receiving WFP distributions often use all goods provided within just a few days. This is likely partly due to social and familial obligations to share food outside of the household.
- The Chadian army's closure of the border with Niger in response to the Boko Haram crisis has devastated the livelihoods of herders in the Bahr el Gazal by cutting them off from cattle markets in Niger and Nigeria, causing the price of cattle to plummet.
- After a short period of decline in market prices linked to the seasonal harvest period, grain prices
 are now on the rise again. This combination of plummeting cattle prices and rising grain prices
 has effectively reduced the purchasing power of agro-pastoral households whose livelihoods
 depend at least partially on the trade in livestock.
- The BeG Food Security and Livelihood Cluster (WFP, IRC, Oxfam, ACF, and local NGOs) stressed in its report covering the month of October (issued November 3) that despite large distributions made by INGOs, "the 2015 post-harvest period is perceived by the communities as being more difficult than the lean period itself". This confirms the difficult situation which the population of the BeG continues to face. That same report states that "the early end of the rainy season impacted crop maturity, which led to a poor harvest.... The presence of locusts in some areas pushed some communities to harvest before maturity. To this must be added the rising prices of essential commodities in the Moussoro market, in times where prices should normally decline with the arrival of the new crops. This increase relates to the price of millet, maize and sorghum compared to the survey of prices done in September by WFP."

In the village of Hanga, monitored by WFP as a weathervane for the situation in the region as a whole, the October Food Consumption Score (SCA, Score de consommation alimentaire) shows an increase in the proportion of households with an acceptable SCA, rising from 60% to 70%, following the general food distribution (GFD) conducted by IRC (with WFP funding) in the sub-prefecture of Michemiré. Conversely, the average Coping Strategy Index (CSI) is 19.1 among surveyed households. As in September, the 100% of surveyed households have a CSI above 10 – the threshold score for determining that a household is likely resorting to negative coping strategies. These recent findings indicate that assistance is still vitally required and that cash transfers will support beneficiaries in meeting basic needs, increasing food stocks, building resilience, and limiting the use of negative coping strategies.

5. Activities for the Following Quarter

The main activities for the following quarter (October, November, and December) will consist of catching up on the distributions by November 15th. The IRC will combine the four planned distributions into two. As food shortages are still important, the distributions will have significant impact on households' food security (see above). In addition, the re-evaluation of household size following the baseline survey, which showed that households have an average of nine, and not six members, reveals that each household has more mouths to feed with their limited food resources than previously thought, highlighting the continued need for distributions.

Given the doubling of distribution values, appropriate arrangements will be made to support households to manage the quantities and amounts which will be delivered in two distributions instead of four. Particularly in southern BeG (Amsilep) where the cumulated cash will reach 80,000 CFA per month (beneficiaries in northern BeG were to receive 8,000 CFA in cash per month under the original plan, and so will now receive 16,000 CFA in cash per month, in addition to food vouchers) the IRC will do the following:

- During awareness sessions (when distributing beneficiary cards and when distributing cash/food vouchers), special attention will be paid to explain that, unlike other beneficiaries in the north BeG where weekly markets are less functional, cash was given to them in the place of food coupons to offer them more choices in buying their food (quantity and quality). Accordingly, they should favor the purchase of food.
- The IRC will hold distributions on the same day as the markets and in physical proximity to food vendors. This will mitigate the risk of diversion targets and will facilitate quick spending of the money distributed.
- 65% of beneficiaries who will directly receive the cash are women, who are unaccustomed to
 managing the family budget. To avoid the temptation to entrust money received to husbands and
 to prevent husbands from claiming this money for other purposes than the households' food
 need, experienced IRC staff from a BPRM-funded livelihoods project will support Moussoro staff
 to sensitize and educate men and women, in order to curb tensions that might be created by
 managing this money.
- The IRC has found that theft is not a significant risk in the local context of Bahr el Gazal, where instances of banditry and robbery are infrequent. However, the IRC will mitigate whatever risk may exist by holding meetings with beneficiaries prior to distribution days in order to agree on possible mitigation strategies. IRC staff will remain available to beneficiaries on the day of the distributions and during PDM in order to address any concerns regarding risk.

In conclusion, the first round of distribution is scheduled to start on November 16th and end on December 3rd, and followed by post-distribution monitoring (PDM) ten days later. The second distribution is scheduled to start on December 14th, followed by PDM starting in early January.

A one-day learning event will be organized by January 15th, near the end of the project. The main aim of this activity will be to learn from the IRC's first round of large food/cash vouchers distribution in the BeG with FFP, to better prepare, plan and conduct further actions, as needs will likely be higher in the coming months.

Annex 1: Indicator Update

	Indicator	Baseline data	Actual Q1	Cumulative	Comment			
	Result 1: Targeted households have their basic food needs covered during the lean season							
Indicator 1	% the targeted beneficiaries maintain acceptable levels of food consumption (FCS > 42) during the intervention	1,656 households (46%)	0 households (0%°)		No distributions done yet.			
	Target: 1,656 households (80%)							
Indicator 2	% BeG's food insecure households benefiting from direct assistance (cash distributions and food vouchers)	0%	0 households (0%°)		No distributions done yet.			
	Target: 64% of HH							
Indicator 3	# cash transfers and food vouchers distributed to beneficiaries	0	0 households (0%)		No distributions done yet.			
	Target: Two monthly cash transfers to 4500 HH; Two monthly food vouchers distribution to 3000 HH							

Indicator 4	Value of cash transfers distributed to targeted beneficiaries.	0	0 households (0%)	No distributions done yet.		
	Target: 1,224,000 USD (136 USD * 4500 HH * 2 distributions)					
Indicator 5	# months from donor-signed agreement to distribution of cash and food vouchers to beneficiaries	0	4	No distributions done yet.		
	Target: 1st distribution: 1 month					
Indicator 6	# of beneficiaries targeted and reached, disaggregated by sex and age Target: 40,500 total; 20,250 F, 20,250 M	0	Target: 40,500 total; 20,250 F 20,250 M	Same number of households than initially planned, family size has increased from an average of six persons to nine.		
	Result 2: Targeted households' livelihoods are secured throughout the intervention					
Indicator 1	% of targeted beneficiary households who do not resort to negative coping strategies during the intervention	55%	Unknown	Neither distribution nor assessment has been done at this this stage.		
	Target: 60%					

Indicator 2	% of trained HH applying at least two home budgeting principles from the awareness-raising package in their resource management Target: 50% of HH	0	0	Awareness-raising package in resource management; not yet delivered.
Indicator 3	% of the targeted individuals who can name three key practices to prevent malnutrition at the end of the distribution cycle Target: 21,600 individuals, 80%	0	0	Key practices to prevent malnutrition training not yet delivered.
Indicator 4	% of HHs targeted reporting a decrease in use of negative coping strategies as measured by baseline and endline studies Target: 60%	0%	Unknown	Neither distribution nor assessment has been done at this stage.
Indicator 5	Lessons learned from the program are collected, analyzed and shared through an evaluation report Target: One report	0	0	Neither distribution nor assessment at this stage, report has not been done yet.